

Invest in Leadership

Finding 4: Successful youth violence prevention efforts are driven by dynamic and talented leaders who develop collaborative strategies tailored to their communities.

Violence prevention efforts require skilled, knowledgeable and tenacious leaders. They must understand the root causes of violence and know which strategies reduce and prevent violence, as well as those that do not. Leaders must have the ability to rally individuals from many disciplines to the cause of prevention and keep them at the table over time. The State, however, invests most of its youth violence prevention resources in programs. It does not invest in growing the youth and adult leaders that communities need to implement effective strategies. The State should support a leadership institute to enhance the capacity of communities to implement and sustain effective youth violence prevention strategies.

Communities Need Leaders

Solving tough community problems like youth violence requires leaders with a vision and the ability to translate that vision into reality. Violence prevention leaders must be able to engage others in their vision and act as catalysts for broad-based community change. And while certain intangible characteristics are often ascribed to individuals deemed leaders, most leaders are not born with those characteristics. Rather, leadership is developed through training, experience and hard work.

The Superintendent of Public Instruction testified that effective prevention has to do with the people involved and the kind of communication and environment that is provided. She said, “In other words, the people delivering the program are at least as important in determining success as is the particular program.”⁶⁶

But the State does not support the development of adult and youth leaders. Most state violence prevention resources pay for programs. The State does not build the capacity of individuals in communities to develop and sustain strong collaborative prevention initiatives. Some agencies permit grant recipients to spend a portion of funds for staff development, but the opportunities

Violence Prevention Leaders

In Monrovia, a community-wide effort that dramatically reduced truancy was spearheaded by the police chief.

In Boyle Heights, “the gang capitol of Los Angeles,” a Jesuit priest is behind a multi-faceted strategy that includes a child care center, after-school programs and job training for rival gang members.

In Santa Clara County, where violent juvenile crime increased by 321 percent from 1985 to 1994 – over four times the national rate – leadership is provided by the mayor. In 1991 the mayor made gang violence prevention a priority. An interagency task force developed a comprehensive plan to provide a continuum of services, including prevention, intervention and suppression. The community believes these efforts contributed significantly to the subsequent 56 percent decline in gang-related arrests from 1995 to 1999.

Source: Best Cycle IX Program, Evaluation Report 1999-2000, Mayor’s Gang Prevention Task Force, September 1, 2000.

How Leaders are Developed

Management schools, large corporations, military organizations and others have long recognized opportunities to identify potential leaders and develop their skills to motivate people, build partnerships and solve problems. Some examples of organizations investing in leadership:

- **American Leadership Forum.** Selects individuals from communities across the country and provides them with a yearlong, intensive leadership development program.
- **California Attorney General's Youth Corps Program.** Youth between the ages of 18 and 25 are selected to provide public safety awareness, conflict resolution and mentoring to "at-risk" middle and high school students.
- **Law Enforcement Command Colleges.** Provides intensive leadership development to law enforcement professionals with leadership characteristics and goals.
- **Youth as Resources Program.** The National Crime Prevention Council helps young people to identify community problems and design projects to solve them.

and content are inconsistent and insufficient. The administrator of a community-based program said that nationally the demise of grassroots initiatives that hold promise is often due to the inability to meet the organization's strategic needs. He said: "By undertaking a capacity-building training effort, there will be a greater alignment, higher quality of service and increased accountability to the communities they [leaders] serve."⁶⁷

Research and practice show that the best programs can fail if the individuals delivering them do not have the right knowledge, skills and attitude. Violence prevention is no different. Its leaders must be able to build and sustain participation and cooperation among many sectors of the community, share power and mediate disputes. Absent strong leaders, prevention initiatives flounder, "proven" programs don't live up to their potential and scarce resources are squandered. Absent leadership, the broad-based community partnerships promised on grant applications may never materialize.

The success of the violence prevention efforts witnessed by the Commission hinged as much on the skills and attitudes of administrators as the strategies used. Leaders represented different sectors of the community and had diverse personal and professional perspectives. What they

had in common, however, was a belief in the intrinsic value of every young person and in prevention as the best long-term solution to youth violence. They knew how to bring together a critical mass of individuals committed to developing healthy young people. And they had the skills and knowledge to assess their youth violence problems and tailor appropriate responses.

Characteristics of Leaders

Leadership and how to improve it is a topic of discussion from boardrooms to community halls. The American Leadership Forum was founded in 1980 by a group of prominent Americans to address what they described as a national crisis in leadership. Each year the forum selects individuals in each of its seven chapter areas and provides them with a yearlong, intensive leadership development program that includes the importance of

diversity to community endeavors, consensus building and collaborative problem solving, visionary leadership and conflict management.

While acknowledging that there is no single characterization that can be applied to all leaders, the forum has identified the following five key factors in the development of good leadership.

1. A leader must have a compelling vision, as well as the ability to translate the vision into reality.
2. A leader must be able to draw others around the vision and enlist them in his or her purpose.
3. A leader must have an approach that is both powerful and empowering to others, and which can be transforming.
4. A leader understands the structure and design of the organization, and recognizes that structure strongly affects the ability of the organization to perform. A leader adapts the structure to conform to the larger purpose of the organization.
5. A leader recognizes the need for a balance between intuition and reason and foresees things that those he or she leads may not.

The forum also stresses the importance of moral and reflective conceptions of leadership.⁶⁸

Violence Prevention Training

A number of entities offer training for violence prevention leaders and practitioners.

- **National Funding Collaborative on Violence Prevention.** Invites teams of practitioners to participate in immersion training to build their capacities to implement violence prevention strategies. www.nfcvp.org.
- **The Prevention Institute.** Presents a distance learning series, "Partnerships for Preventing Violence," which is also available on videotape. Skill building components include forming effective coalitions and developing comprehensive primary prevention strategies. The project emphasizes leadership development. www.preventioninstitute.org.
- **Youth Crime Watch of America.** Provides youth leadership training, training retreats, implementation training and training of trainers. www.ycwa.org.

What Violence Prevention Leaders Need

The characteristics identified by the American Leadership Forum are as important for individuals charged with developing a complex, community-wide strategy to reduce youth violence as they are for the CEO of a Fortune 500 company. But each leader also needs knowledge and competencies unique to their work and their communities. Violence prevention leaders do not simply implement programs created elsewhere, but develop and tailor programs to the circumstances of their communities.

The following are specific competencies that members of the Commission's advisory committee said youth violence prevention leaders should have:

Benefits of Leadership Training

Research to determine the impact of the American Leadership Forum program on communities found the following:

- Dramatically increased problem-solving skills, greatly enhanced leadership abilities, and a clarification of goals and issues.
 - Dramatic and tangible improvements in the approach to critical areas of health and poverty, youth guidance, creation of community forums, and appreciation of cultural and ethnic diversity.
 - A heightened sense of community conscience. Participants cited most often the ability to access, trust, and collaborate with a network of trained colleagues as the key to dealing successfully with complex community issues.
- ✓ Understanding that violence is a complex problem that crosses disciplinary boundaries. As such, understanding that violence prevention requires multiple, coordinated responses from many sectors of the community, including justice, health and human services and education.
 - ✓ Knowledge about the underlying causes of violence and violence as learned behavior.
 - ✓ Knowledge about key community, family and individual risk and resiliency factors for violence.
 - ✓ Understanding of the latest information about what works and what doesn't work to reduce and prevent youth violence.
 - ✓ Diagnostic skills to assess community strengths, weaknesses and devise appropriate strategies.
 - ✓ An understanding of the barriers to collaboration.
- ✓ A grasp of theoretical models of organizational change, including those specific to violence prevention such as the Spectrum of Prevention.
 - ✓ Facilitation and mediation skills.
 - ✓ Ability to build partnerships and access non-traditional funding sources.

Models for Leadership Training

An emphasis on leadership development would optimize California's prevention investment. A cadre of youth and adult leaders with the necessary knowledge, competencies and mindsets could be developed. Several models for adult and youth leadership development exist that could bolster efforts by the State.

California Wellness Foundation – Leadership Development Program

As part of its 10-year Violence Prevention Initiative, the California Wellness Foundation implemented four inter-related components. They include a Policy and Public Education Program, Leadership and Professional Development Program, Community Action Program, and an Initiative Support and Capacity Building Program.

The Leadership Development Program includes an Academic Fellows Program and Community Fellows Program. The Academic Fellows Program trains health professionals from a variety of specialties on a multidisciplinary

public health approach to violence prevention. Fellows are trained at six academic institutions throughout California. The Community Fellows Program supports and links grassroots leaders of community violence prevention efforts through leadership and professional development. Community fellows receive technical assistance and training to build individual leadership skills and sustain local efforts to prevent violence.

Who Needs Information

In addition to violence prevention leaders, policy-makers, government agencies, parents, and youth need access to this information.

Finding 5 proposes a state resource center that, among other things, could be responsible for acquiring and widely disseminating this information.

RAND gathered information from community leaders about their participation in the Leadership Development Program. Evaluators found that to be effective training must be tailored to the needs of the participants and be convenient. Because communities and leaders are diverse, training needs to respect and be customized to those needs. Because of the demands of their work and their commitment to it, community leaders prefer training that does not take them out of their communities for extended periods of time.

The foundation's executive director told the Commission that if he had it to do again, he would put even greater emphasis on the leadership development components of the initiative.

Advanced Training for Violence Prevention Practitioners

Partnerships for Preventing Violence, a collaborative effort between the Prevention Institute and Harvard University's School of Public Health and Education Development Center, Inc., is an innovative three-year project that provides violence prevention training to practitioners via satellite. So far, it has reached more than 10,000 violence prevention leaders. Using a cross-disciplinary approach, participants are provided a range of violence prevention perspectives, including health, education and justice. Aired in over 80 facilitated sites, each broadcast has a specific focus. Major themes are the complexity of violence and the relationship of violence to other aspects of culture, the need for informed decision-making in violence prevention planning, the importance of collaboration, the spectrum of prevention, and key risk and protective factors.

Develop Youth Leadership

Too often "solutions" to problems involving youth are crafted by adults with little or no input from the youth the programs intend to "fix." Not surprisingly, the results are often disappointing. But in communities where youth are involved in defining problems and crafting solutions, the results have been heartening. Disconnected youth have become connected. Youth

have mobilized other youth. Youth have reported that for the first time they feel that adults in their community care about them. Most importantly, violence has decreased and leaders for tomorrow have emerged.

The following descriptions of national, state and local initiatives demonstrate ways to effectively involve youth in violence prevention initiatives and how leadership qualities emerge as a result of that involvement.

Attorney General's Youth Council on Violence Prevention

Attorney General Lungren in 1997 appointed a Youth Council on Violence Prevention. He asked the youth council to use the work of his Policy Council on Violence Prevention, and their own experiences, to help reverse the "culture of violence." He asked the council to address the causes of violence from a youth perspective and recommend solutions that require youth and adult action.

The Youth Council, made up of 10 teams of youth and their adult mentors from across the state, held public hearings and interviewed policy-makers and community members in their home communities. Following a year of work and deliberations, the council released a final report and CD-ROM containing "16 power plays" for preventing violence. The Youth Council established a model for how state and local agencies can work directly with youth to develop solutions to youth crime and violence and other problems.⁶⁹ (www.caag.state.ca.us/cvpc/youth/youth.htm)

National Crime Prevention Council – Youth as Resources Program

The National Crime Prevention Council's Youth as Resources Program asks young people to identify community problems and design projects to solve them. With projects in communities across the country, youth have tackled issues from homelessness to hunger and child abuse. The projects have involved delinquent youth and honor students. The project of a young man on probation was to clean up around an elderly woman's house and read to her. When asked why he chose to do this, he responded "You don't understand. It's the first time in my life I have ever been thanked."⁷⁰ (www.yar.org)

Teens, Crime and the Community

Teens, Crime and the Community is supported by the National Crime Prevention Council and Street Law, Inc. and is funded by the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. The goal of the program is to reduce crime, prevent delinquency, and involve young people in community crime prevention efforts. Programs operate in schools and community settings. They offer community service, leadership development

and interaction with community members who serve as mentors. Programs operate in approximately 600 sites in all 50 states. In California, the Los Angeles Unified School District operates a regional center serving about 2,500 high-risk youth through a drop out recovery program. The program also can be used by Boys & Girls Clubs, juvenile justice facilities, after-school programs, faith-based organizations and park and recreation programs. (www.nationaltcc.org)

Ojai Youth Master Plan

In 1996 community leaders and residents in Ojai Valley in Ventura County came together over concern about their youth and the need for increased support systems. More than 1,000 residents identified needs, resources and issues for children, youth and families. They participated in 14 focus groups, two public forums and returned 800 surveys. More than two-thirds of those participating were youth. The resulting Youth Master Plan is a blueprint to foster a safe and nurturing community for young people and promotes the positive participation and interaction of youth and adults. The plan also served as the basis for the Youths and Adults for Community program, which was funded by The Wellness Foundation to provide youth leadership development.

Youth Crime Watch of America

Youth Crime Watch of America assists students in developing youth-led programs that include up to nine components. They include “watch out” activities such as crime reporting and “help out” activities such as mentoring and conflict resolution. The youth leadership component is designed to enhance the leadership skills of participants so that they can better organize and lead local efforts. (www.ycwa.org)

A Role for the State

As the largest funder of local violence prevention programs, California should invest in the youth and adult leadership training necessary to ensure that programs are effectively implemented and managed, can withstand economic downturns and budget shortfalls and other threats to success. The State has four opportunities to build leadership into prevention:

1. Build community capacity. The State could partner with other entities with expertise in youth violence prevention and leadership training to establish a leadership institute capable of developing leadership training of the highest quality and providing it on a scale large enough to make a difference – ensuring access to all communities. A non-profit

multi-disciplinary entity could garner broad support, including that of foundations with a role in violence prevention.

2. Tie leadership training to grant funding. The State could require that all state-funded youth crime and violence prevention programs encourage grantees to participate in youth and adult leadership training. A portion of grant funds could be earmarked for training that could be provided by the Leadership Institute or existing training providers.

3. Provide a stable source of funding. The State could earmark a portion of the base and special needs funding recommended in Finding 2 for youth and adult leadership training. Communities could obtain the training from the Leadership Institute and other providers.

4. Support expansion of youth leadership development efforts. The State could work with the National Crime Prevention Council to expand the number of Teens, Crime and the Community sites and Youth as Resources programs in California. It also could work with Youth Crime Watch of America to provide training in California.

Summary: People Run Programs

To succeed, violence prevention efforts require skilled and knowledgeable leaders. They must be able to assess youth violence problems unique to their communities and customize effective responses. But the State supports programs, not leadership development. The State could optimize its prevention investment by establishing a mechanism to train the youth and adult leaders necessary to effectively advance the cause of prevention in communities across California.

Recommendation 4: The State should help communities fortify youth violence prevention strategies by establishing a Youth Violence Prevention Institute which should, among other functions, develop emerging youth and adult leaders. The institute should:

- ❑ **Be non-profit and multi-disciplinary.** The institute should be established as a California non-profit organization. The Youth Violence Prevention Coordinating Council should serve as the board of directors of the institute and should hire an executive officer to administer the institute.
- ❑ **Provide knowledge.** The institute should educate youth and adult leaders about individual, family and community risk and resiliency factors. Training should provide the latest information about violence as learned behavior, brain development and other underlying causes of youth violence. It should assist community leaders to collect, share and use data to further their prevention goals. The institute should forge partnerships with high schools and colleges to provide leadership training.
- ❑ **Build skills needed for success.** The institute should work with emerging youth and adult leaders to identify and overcome barriers to collaboration and provide them with facilitation skills. Youth and adult leaders should be taught how to develop, implement and sustain effective prevention strategies. They should learn how to develop effective partnerships, identify alternative funding sources, and develop skills in others.

Tapping Local Talent

California is endowed with many successful leaders – school principals, police chiefs, ministers, doctors, business and community officials.

The goal of the institute should be to encourage the development of emerging leaders. The Commission is unsure precisely how this should be done. But these efforts should be creative, and informed by those Californians who have distinguished themselves by improving their organizations and the communities they serve.

This leadership development may involve apprenticeships, formal education, or an energetic and growing network of those making a difference.

It should not be limited to classroom training or one-time seminars. It should be field-based, practical, intense and enduring.

The graphic on the following page shows the proposed institute and its relationship to the Youth Violence Prevention Council recommended earlier.

